606 these bukoñwana rules would cause death. Yet they are religiously kept as necessary to ensure normal relations between the two families.

We have already seen the taboos which must be observed during the betrothal period (p. 106). Later on, during the gatherings which take place *before marriage*, other taboos are imposed.

606 802 281 584 784 1. In the discussion concerning the lobola, when oxen are counted, the bridegroom's parents must never offer eight head of cattle, because one of them will be killed for the feast, and so eight means only seven. *Seven* is counted by raising, one after the other, the five fingers of the left hand and the thumb and index-finger of the right. In raising the index-finger, they might point it at the bakoñwana, and this would be a mortal offence. To point at anyone with the index-finger is as bad as bewitching him. It is done only in anger, and all the preceding discussions might be nullified if such an imprudence were committed.

2. Should one of the oxen be frightened by the shouts of joy with which the arrival of the herd is greeted and by the sham-fight of the lobola day, and run away home, it is taboo. The ox has seen that something is wrong and has consequently fled. Even should they succeed in bringing it back, "timpfalo ti tjukile," the conscience (or the diaphragm) has been stirred!

584 825 777 784 3. If one of the oxen has no horns (homu ya mhulu), or only abortive horns, psa yila : *bukoñwana byi ta pfumala timpsalu*, viz., the relations with relatives-in-law will have no tenderness, because such an ox moves its head to and fro as it wanders in the night ; it is abnormal. The bride's family will not accept it.

4. Should the lobolo consist of hoes, and should the rain fall on them while they are being carried to the bakoñwana, it is taboo. The lobolo must not be brought in a wet condition, otherwise the new relations will be spoilt (bukoñwana byi ta tshipa) ; the young people will not be able to marry.

5. Do not bring with you tobacco in the leaf when going *bukwen* as a fiancé, bring only ground tobacco, or misfortune will happen. Later on, when you have married your wife, it is allowable.

6. Never eat zebra or reedbuck's meat when staying with your parents-in-law. Should they kill one of these animals while

192 carefully studied. They correspond to a phase of human development when language is still living and creating new expressions, enriching itself by means of vocables invented on all sides. Let me remind the reader of what I said in Vol. I, Appendix II about *nxoko*. This expression was invented by an old Thonga of Rikatla, a blind man of 70 or 80, who expressed by this exclamation his satisfaction at finding himself in good company. The word seemed so much to the point that it became famous. The inventor was surnamed Nxoko and created the verb ku *nxoka*, to be happy, even to *nxokela*, the relative derivative, to be happy in a certain place. Certainly such linguistic phenomena can do much to explain the origin of language. Even lofty spiritual terms have been derived from these exclamations, springing from the childish mind of the Natives. So *phati-phati*, the shining of a fat ox, has given rise to *ku phatima* and *kwetsi-kwetsi*, the brilliancy of a bottle, to *ku kwetsima*, both verbs which were chosen as best expressing the idea of sanctity or purity (in its positive sense). Did not Max Muller conjecture that the root of *Deus*, a word which has played such a great part in the evolution of mankind, originally came from the exclamation *Devar* to which our Aryan forefathers gave vent when contemplating the sky? Devar was probably nothing but a descriptive adverb.

It is to be feared that books and book language will destroy this most interesting mode of speech, so much used by those Natives who are true Bantus, and the genius of the race will certainly suffer from this loss. Let Europeans, in this as in so many other domains, try to *understand* the Native in order not to spoil him !

E. THE NUMERALS, AND THE WANT OF AN ARITHMETICAL SENSE.

● 802 Compared to the thousands of descriptive adverbs, Numerals make a poor show indeed in the Thonga Grammar! The Thongas possess only seven : *ñwe*, one ; *biri*, two ; *raru*, three ; which are declined like adjectives ; *mune*, four ; *ntlhanu*, five, *khume*, ten ; *dzana*, a hundred, which are nouns. With these seven words they must express all numbers. The process is very complicated indeed. Nine hundred and eighty seven will have to be rendered as follows : five hundred, and four hundred,

and five tens, and three tens, and five, and two. This system of numeration is clearly decimal, and is in direct relation with the ten fingers of the hands ; this is proved by the fact that, when counting, Natives generally use their fingers. They start with the little finger of the left hand, *one* ; then the little finger and the third finger, *two* ; these two and the second, *three* ; these three and the index, *four* ; these four and the thumb, *five* ; they then add the fingers of the right hand, beginning with the thumb : five plus one, five plus two, five plus three, five plus four. *Ten* is shown by clapping both hands ; notice that five, the left hand with the thumb separated from the four other fingers, imitates the Roman sign of V, and ten, the two hands joined, with the fingers crossing each other, make an X, the Roman sign for 10! This shows that our system of numbers, of which we are justly proud, probably began in the same way as amongst most of the Bantu tribes!

On the other hand it must be said that, if this system has not reached a higher development, the cause lies in the fact that Thongas do not wish, or do not *take the trouble* to deal with high figures. They very soon declare that a number is : "tjandja-bahlayi (Dj.) or hlulabakonti (Ro.)" viz., "the one which passes the capacity of reckoners." When Gungunyana made a raid into the Ntimane district and stole the oxen there, his men tried to count the cattle, but, having experienced much difficulty in the operation, they said to their king : "It is tjandjabahlayi!" — "They are innumerable!" There were a few hundreds of them (1).

More than that! Bantus have not attained to *any precision* in counting the hours of the day, for instance, because there was no necessity for doing so in the primitive state. Consider how greatly our habit of always consulting our watches has contributed to create a sense of precision in us and to introduce it into our lives. For the Bantus, the sun is the only watch, and that great time-keeper is all sufficient for them. Do they wish to make an appointment for the following day? They point to a place in the

(1) As regards *counting men*, in former times this was positively prohibited. If any one, seeing a throng assembled on the hubo, wanted to know the number of people present, they would say to him : "What! You are counting us? Whom do you want to do away with?" (Shana wa hi nkonta, u ta hi pumba na?)

805 sky, and say: "We shall meet when the sun has reached that spot." It may be in the morning, at the time "when the rays of the sun begin to pierce" (tlhaba-sana); at noon, nhlekanhin "when the sun is in the middle of its course;" in the afternoon, *hi mfenya*, say the Rongas "when the sea breeze comes up", as is the case almost every day; or "when the sun is going down" (ndjenga) (1). It must be added that the sun is rarely hidden in these lands of light.

As regards the counting of days, they have special names for to-morrow (mundjuku), the day after to-morrow (mundlwana), and the three following days; for the third day, pambari; the fourth, wo dlankambane, viz., the one when the travellers going on a business journey break the plate in order to be obliged to come home (p. 144); for the fifth, wa tiki- tiki. Tolo, is yesterday; tolwen, the day before yesterday; tolwen wa hase, the day preceding the day before yesterday; ñanwaka, this year; hashau, next year; nweshemu, last year; ñwaka lowo, the year before last. One hardly counts days, or years, beyond this point (2).

802 One occasion on which arithmetical skill, or at least the faculty of addition, is specially required, is the counting of the lobolo, when this consists of hoes. Then the tens are carefully piled up separately, the whole family witnessing the operation, but this can hardly be called a mathematical achievement.

So, on the whole, opportunities of using the arithmetical

823 (1) If this use of the sun as a means of fixing the time inevitably leads to a want of precision, it has on the other hand, created a wonderful sense of direction amongst the Natives. They never lose sight of the North, they always know where the sun rises and sets, and this is no doubt the secret of their instinct. When travelling with them, it is not necessary to consult the compass; I would rather put my fate in their hands, knowing that they will not make any mistakes as regards direction (they will certainly make many as regards distance), as they say their *hearts* (timbilu, the same word employed for genius and instinct), viz., their subconscious powers, help them better than our instruments in the midst of the African bush; not to mention their knowledge of native paths. These powers have been cultivated by the constant observation of the sun.

(2) In my Grammaire Ronga, another list of names of the days following to-day is given, containing as many as 7. This seems to be the Ronga version, whilst that here given is the Djonga. However, in neither case is the list in constant and common use. It is known only to certain individuals who look on it more or less as a curiosity. To count days further than the day after to-morrow is quite unusual.

faculty are very rare in primitive Native life, and we ought not to be astonished that this faculty has remained undeveloped. To pretend however that it is altogether wanting would be erroneous. I can give many proofs that it exists, and sometimes manifests itself in an interesting way. 802

First, in the game called *nyengeli-nyengeli mune.* The players place a number of fruit stones on the ground two by two. One turns his back, and the other player, pointing to the first group of two, asks: "Nyengeli nyengeli mune?" i.e: "How many stones are there?" The one whose back is turned replies: "Take one away and place it elsewhere," specifying where. The same thing is done with the second, and so on. Certain groups have eventually more stones than others. When a group is entirely scattered, the guesser says: "Makua ntsikitane," meaning "There are no more." The questioner then passes rapidly from group to group, over and over again, and the guesser must state how many stones each group contains. The game requires a considerable effort of memory. 524 802

Second proof: Shinangana! Shinangana is a man living in Spelonken, near Elim Station, a raw Native who is ignorant of the art of reading and writing, and who never went to school, but who has created a *chronology* embracing the past 70 years. He knows what has happened in each year since 1859, and has arrived unaided at the conception of an era. His era starts from the emigration of the Thonga tribes into the Transvaal, when they fled before Manukosi, on the return of the Ngoni chief from the Mosapa or Gaza country (I. p. 28). The Nkunas, Mavundjas, Tsungus and other Hlabi clans were obliged at that time to take refuge in Spelonken, and this is the beginning of the era. Most of the years after that great event have their special designation. I had the good fortune to have an interview with Shinangana in 1905 and was able to note the details of his chronology, as he dictated them to me. After having enumerated all these years, he concluded in a triumphant tone with the exclamation: "All these years since the return of Manukosi make five hundred, and three hundred, and four months!" This is a most curious piece of Native historiography, I think quite unique in the whole Thonga tribe. 805